BEN McADAMS
U.S. CONGRESS

Resuming explosive nuclear weapons testing is unnecessary and harmful to Utahns. Congressman McAdams is working to stop tests from restarting.

Pictured Left: Shot Baneberry, detonated on December 18, 1970, was buried 900 feet below ground. It still spewed radioactive debris 10,000 feet into the atmosphere where it was picked up by the jet stream and carried eastward.

The U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) in an Oct 1989 study concluded that since 1970 and the Baneberry test, 126 underground tests have resulted in radioactive material reaching the atmosphere. While safeguards were built-in to each test to protect against radioactive release, OTA stated, "there can never be 100 percent confidence that a test will not release radioactive material."

Congressional Action by Congressman McAdams

- PASSED in the House, July 2020 – Amendment prohibiting tax dollars for new explosive nuclear weapons testing. More info
- Offered language in the House Appropriations Energy and Water, and Defense bills prohibiting federal funds from new nuclear testing, adopted in the base text. More info
- Cosponsor of the PLANET Act, prohibiting federal funds from new nuclear weapons testing. Legislation currently moving through House committees. More info
- Cosponsor of the No Nuclear Testing Without Approval Act – Prohibits new nuclear weapons testing with out congressional approval from both the House and Senate.

FAQs Regarding Resuming Nuclear Weapons Testing

What has the current Administration done to indicate they may resume explosive nuclear weapons testing?

- In May 2020, the Administration considered ideas to resume nuclear weapons testing at the Nevada Test Site. More info
- This year, the Senate voted to set aside $10 million in its version of the defense bill, to conduct nuclear weapons testing if sought by the Administration. More info (see Section 3166)

Why is resuming explosive nuclear weapons testing unnecessary?

- For 24 straight years, the departments of Energy and Defense continue to certify "the safety, security, and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile to the President ***without*** the use of nuclear explosive testing." More info
- On June 30, 2020, National Nuclear Security Administration Administrator Gordon-Hagerty confirmed in a letter to Congress that, "Nothing has changed. The current stockpile remains safe, secure, and reliable."
- The United States replaced explosive nuclear testing with an annual assessment process through the Department of Energy's Stockpile Stewardship and Management Program (SSMP). These annual assessments rely on science and advanced simulation to rigorously examine each weapon system and ensure they remain safe, secure, and effective. Successive administrations have strengthened the SSMP, investing in science-based policy to resolve many stockpile issues.

What are the dangers of resuming explosive nuclear weapons testing?

- Radiation exposure is linked to higher incidences of birth defects and some cancers, such as leukemia, thyroid, breast, liver and lung.
- To date, more than 37,000 individuals have been awarded compensation under the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) as a result of a verified medical condition connected to nuclear weapons testing - a number that is likely lower than the real incidence rates due to the limited geographic coverage area under RECA.
- Nuclear weapons testing also has negative effects on the ecological and environmental conditions of the region, including contamination of groundwater, livestock contamination, air quality, and soil quality.

Can underground nuclear tests be safe?

- Over 900 underground detonations took place at the Nevada Test Site. These tests took place in large shafts, which were sealed to contain radiation. However, many failed and vented radiation into the atmosphere, sometimes miles into the atmosphere.

- One of the starkest examples was the Baneberry nuclear test, in December 1970. The blast vented a radioactive debris cloud three kilometers high, which drifted into adjacent states
- The event affected 86 test site workers, with two dying of cancer linked to radiation exposure just four years later.
- After this failure, the Department of Energy commissioned an investigation and produced a report citing what went wrong.
- Underground testing occurred after a Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963 banned open-air testing. Past underground tests have proven to be unsafe and we don't know what dangers could occur in the future**.**
- Since 1970 and the Baneberry test, 126 underground tests have resulted in radioactive material reaching the atmosphere, according to a 1989 study from the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment.